

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR CH

SUBJECT: FLOODING IN CENTRAL CHINA

REF: PEKING 1486; HONG KONG 10164; HONG KONG 10084 (NOTAL)

1. USLO HAS ACQUIRED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON FLOODING IN CENTRAL CHINA WHICH INDICATES THAT FLOODING IS BOTH MORE WIDESPREAD AND MORE SERIOUS THAN EARLIER BELIEVED. SERIOUS FLOODING OCCURRED DURING AUGUST IN THE HUAI BASIN OF CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN HONAN, AND LESS SERIOUS FLOODING ALONG THE TANGTZE IN EASTERN HUPEI, THE YELLOW RIVER IN NORTHERN HONAN, AND THE HUAI RIVER IN ANHWEI AND PERHAPS NORTHERN KIANGSU.

2. THE MOST SERIOUS FLOODING WAS APPARENTLY IN THE HUAI RIVER VALLEY, PARTICULARLY NEAR LO HO, HONAN. VICE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE HSIAO PENG INFORMED THE JAPANESE IN LATE AUGUST THAT ONE AREA OF HONAN HAD RECEIVED 700 TO 1,000MM (SIC) OF RAIN IN EARLY AUGUST. ACCORDING TO A BRITISH JOURNALIST, THE MFA SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE FLOODING IN HONAN WAS "VERY SERIOUS" BUT ASKED TO BE QUOTED AS SAYING "RATHER SERIOUS", AS APPEARED IN THE AFP STORY OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AUGUST 21. AN UNIDENTIFIED CHINESE CADRE FROM WUHAN VOL-

UNTEERED TO A USLO OFFICER AUGUST 19 THAT THE FLOODING IN HONAN HAD BEEN "THE MOST SERIOUS IN MANY YEARS, PERHAPS EVER." A JAPANESE EMBASSY OFFICER TOLD US THAT HE SAW FLOODING UP TO THE LEVEL OF THE RAILROAD NEAR PANGPU, ON THE HUAI RIVER IN ANHWEI IN LATE AUGUST AND A USLO OFFICER SAW SLIGHT FLOODING AROUND THE HUAI NEAR HUNGTSE LAKE IN NORTHERN KIANGSU ON AUGUST 20.

3. THE RAILROAD FROM CANTON TO PEKING WAS CUT AUGUST 7 OR 8, AND REMAINS CLOSED FOR PASSENGER TRAFFIC BETWEEN CHENGCHOW IN HONAN AND YUEHYANG IN NORTHERN HUNAN. PEKING FOREIGN PRESS CORRESPONDENTS SAY THAT PRIORITY FREIGHT TRAFFIC HAD RESUMED BY SEPTEMBER 3, BUT WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION. ACCORDING TO THE JAPANESE EMBASSY, THE WATER WAS KNEE-DEEP IN SOME AREAS OF WUHAN IN LATE AUGUST, AND A USLO TRAVELLER SAW A FEW LARGE PATCHES OF FLOODING JUST NORTH OF THE CITY AUGUST 28. THE YANGTZE WAS HIGH BUT NOT OUT OF ITS BANKS BETWEEN NANKING AND SHANGHAI ON AUGUST 19 AND 30.

4. THE YELLOW RIVER WAS OUT OF ITS BANKS NEAR KAIFENG AUGUST 28, ACCORDING TO A USLO TRAVELLER, AND THE AMERICAN INSECT CONTROL DELEGATION REPORTED MINOR FLOODING WEST OF CHENGCHOW AUGUST 16. THE RIVER WAS HIGH BUT NOT OUT OF ITS BANKS NEAR TUNGKUAN AUGUST 24 AND NEAR ITS MOUTH AUGUST 20 AND 30.

5. COMMENT: FROM THESE FRAGMENTARY REPORTS, NO PRECISE ESTIMATE OF EITHER THE EXTENT OR THE SEVERITY OF THE DAMAGE CAN BE GIVEN. HOWEVER, WE SHARE THE VIEW OF THE JAPANESE AGRICULTURAL COUNSELLOR THAT THESE REPORTS INDICATE SERIOUS DAMAGE TO THE COTTON CROP AND LATE GRAIN IN HONAN AND ANHWEI AND SOME DAMAGE IN OTHER AREAS. THE EFFECT ON INDUSTRY OF ALOMST A MONTH'S DISRUPTION OF CHINA'S MAIN NORTH-SOUTH RAIL LINE AND MANY LESS IMPORTANT LINES IS EVEN HARDER TO ESTIMATE, BUT WITH TRANSPORTATION ALREADY A BOTTLENECK, IT IS BOUND TO BE CONSIDERABLE. WE WILL FORWARD FURTHER INFORMATION AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE. THAYER

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